

WASHINGTON – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) said Alabama’s recovery from the recent tornadoes and severe storms needs to include a plan for more storm shelters, safe rooms, and early warning systems.

In a letter to Governor Robert Bentley, Bachus said a priority use for the hazard mitigation aid that the state will be receiving from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should be the construction of more protective shelters, as well as the further development of emergency alert systems.

“A critical factor in preventing an even greater loss of life during the recent tornadoes was the ready accessibility of safe rooms and storm shelters in communities throughout Alabama. Due to advances in early warning technology and alerts carried by television and radio broadcasters and the NOAA weather radio system, it is beyond doubt that more people had an opportunity to seek safe shelter during these extreme storms than during any past severe weather incident,” Bachus wrote.

Bachus said he began meetings yesterday with officials from FEMA, the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration, the State Emergency Management Agency, and local response agencies to discuss ways to promote and accelerate disaster recovery.

“We are working to make sure that our local emergency management officials have the ability to address the needs in their communities in the most effective way. It is encouraging to me that FEMA officials seem to understand what local officials have been telling me for years, that there is a serious need for greater flexibility and less red tape to allow for the most effective and efficient disaster response possible,” Bachus said.

Congressman Bachus urged greater utilization of the Tornado Shelters Act, legislation he wrote that permits community development block grant funding to be used for storm shelters in manufactured housing communities.

“We have again been reminded about the critical importance of having storm shelters

nearby. The Tornado Shelters Act and other programs are available to help communities build secure shelters for their residents. We know that shelters across Alabama provided a safe haven from the storms and saved lives,” Bachus said.

Bachus also called for enhancements to weather alert systems in the state. He recently reintroduced CJ’s Home Protection Act to equip new manufactured homes with NOAA weather radios in order to provide earlier storm warnings.

*To view Fox 6-Birmingham news report on storm shelters, [click here](#).*

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